

SLOBODKIN, LOUIS

DRAWER 2/2

71.2061.05.02857


2/2/1953

Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Louis Slobodkin

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



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<http://archive.org/details/statueslinc>



To Bert Sheldon
with Best wishes
Oct 15 '96 Louis Shubert

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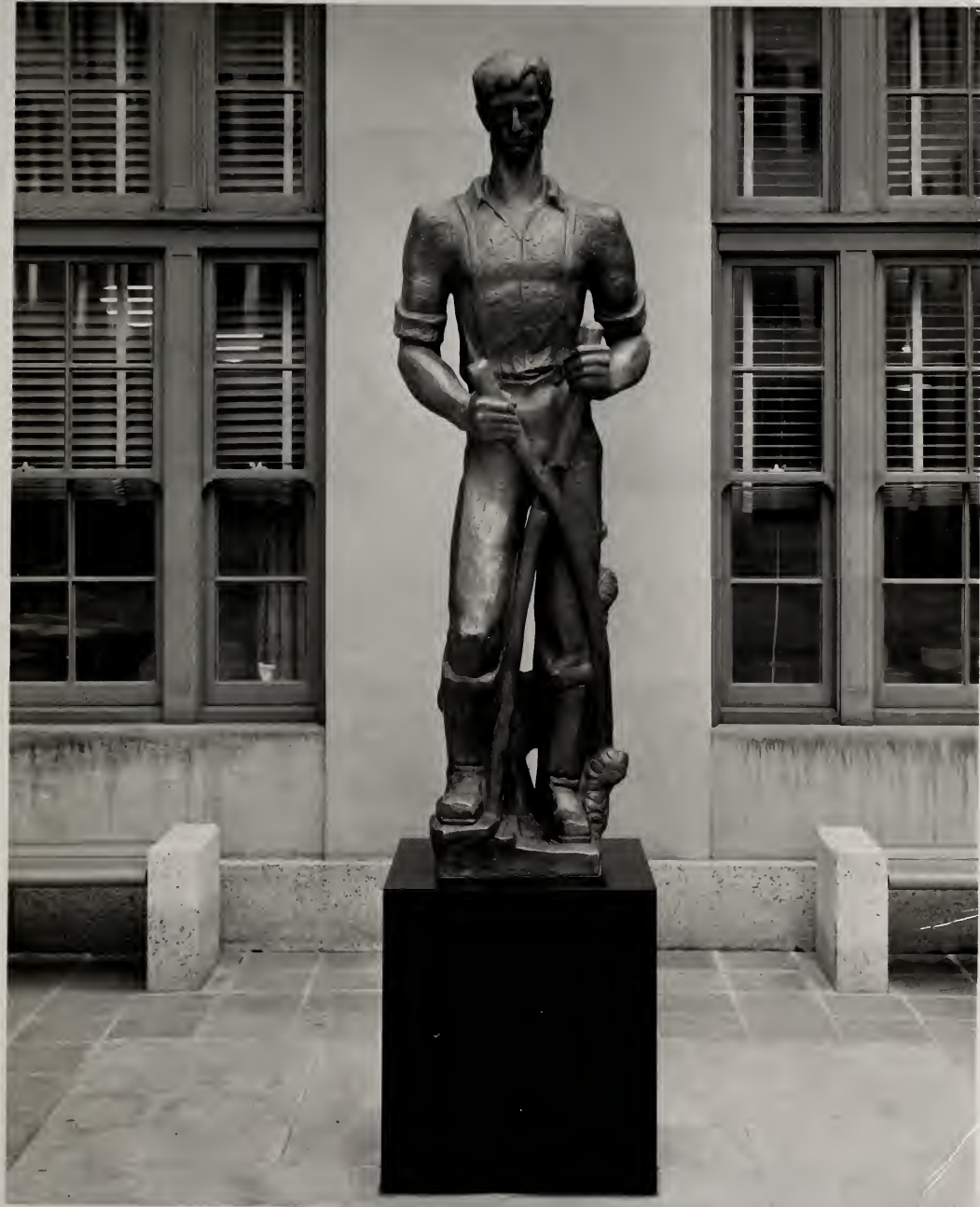
SCULPT By
SLOBODKIN (SLOBODKIN)

STATUE IS IN A
COURT-YARD
OF 'INTERIOR' BLDG
(ACCESS THRU BASEMENT
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NATIONAL ARCHIVES RECORD GROUP NO. 121



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Scepter - Louis H. H. H. H.
Wash. D.C.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES RECORD GROUP NO. 121

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Louis Slobodkin's statue of Abraham Lincoln, which won second prize for sculpture in a New York World's Fair contest, was found to be missing from the Federal Building at the Fair when the artist and his wife went to see it. All that a guard knew was "Tain't here any more," but Theodore T. Hayes, assistant United States Commissioner, said that it had been removed because it hid all the lighting, and was too big for the spot it had occupied. Mr. Hayes said that preview visitors had scoffed at the work and added, "We couldn't take that sort of criticism from people representing John Q. Public. I don't care what those artist fellows think; it should never have been placed there at all."

STATUE OF LINCOLN REPORTED SMASHED

Slovodkin, Sculptor, Says He
Is Certain It Was Broken to
Bits on Flynn's Orders

May 5 '39
LATTER REMAINS SILENT

But Another U. S. Official Is
Said to Have Admitted Fair
Work Was Destroyed

Louis Slobodkin was certain yesterday that his heroic steel and plaster statue of Abraham Lincoln, which won second prize in a competition for sculpture for the Federal Building at the World's Fair, had been smashed with a sledgehammer by a husky workman acting on orders of Edward Flynn, United States Commissioner for the World's Fair and Bronx County Democratic leader.

He quoted a high official of the fine arts section of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department as saying the destruction of the statue had taken place on Saturday. This official, who refused to allow his name to be revealed, confirmed this in Washington yesterday and said the breaking-up had been ordered by Mr. Flynn, "because, in the opinion of a lady with whom he was lunching, it wasn't in 'good taste.'"

Mr. Slobodkin declared further that on Monday he had been told by Theodore T. Hayes, executive assistant United States Commissioner, that the statue had been removed and destroyed. When he asked, he said, if any fragments remained, he was told there were none. And when he asked if the

remains had been carted away, he was told they had. He said he had not seen the smashed statue.

Questioned yesterday about the fate of the Slobodkin conception of Lincoln, a replica of which is said to be the most popular exhibit at the annual outdoor exhibition of the Sculptors Guild at Park Avenue and Fortieth Street, Mr. Hayes said:

"First of all, no one here at the Federal Building has anything against anybody. We have worked hard for two years to show the people how our government functions. It would be more appropriate if you printed something about that."

"Has the statue been destroyed?"
"No comment," Mr. Hayes replied.

"Where is the warehouse it is supposed to be in?"

"No comment," Mr. Hayes said. After a brief pause he added, "After all it is government property. Beyond that there is no comment."

Mr. Flynn, at the Federal Building on the Fair grounds, also said he had "no comment." An assistant commissioner, Charles Stofford, said Mr. Flynn "considered the issue closed."

Mr. Slobodkin, however, did not seem to consider it closed.

"I worked for a year on that statue," he said. "I was informed by long-distance telephone from Washington today that it was destroyed by the sledgehammer of the contractor of the Federal Building by orders of Mr. Flynn. I am absolutely certain it has been destroyed. A day's destruction for a year's work. . . . Oh, well."

The Washington story originated with a Treasury official who has long been connected with the government's art projects. He confirmed what he had told Mr. Slobodkin but, because the statue, which had the approval, artistically, of his department, was owned by another unit of the government—the World's Fair Commission—he asked that his name be not used. He said he had carefully checked his facts, however, and was certain the statue had been smashed.

TON MERRY-GO-ROUND

raised the Lincoln statue at the World's Fair
ner party when a blonde shrieked in horror.
prize-winning sculpture literally got the ax
W PEARSON and ROBERT S. ALLEN

THE WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON, May, 20.—
Most amazing inside story
of the New York World's
Fair is how the prize-winning
statue of Abraham Lincoln in the
Federal Building was broken up
with an ax.

The statue was the work of
Louis Slobodokin, had cost \$4,000
and won high commendation from
artists and laymen. Even Edward
J. Flynn, United States Fair Com-
missioner and Bronx Tammany
boss, praised it. Although his
specialty is Tammany politics,
Flynn was a member of the jury
which last year awarded the
statue second place in a Nation-
wide competition for Federal
Building art.

The statue depicted Lincoln in
the role of a rugged rail-splitter,
and had been given the choice lo-
cation in a pool in the Garden
Court. But suddenly, one day be-
fore the Fair opened, it disap-
peared. When questions were
asked, Theodore T. Hayes, Flynn's
assistant, declared the statue had
been removed from the grounds.
It had been removed, all right,
but not as Hayes implied.

Actually the work of art had
been destroyed—on Flynn's order.

Blonde Made The Suggestion

The husky Bronx boss came to
his decision on the spur of the
moment while showing guests
through the Federal Building
after a gay dinner party. In the
party was a beautiful blonde,
who let out a loud shriek of hor-
ror as she beheld the ungainly
Lincoln.

"Don't tell me," she demanded,
"that you are going to leave that
dreadful thing here for the public
to see it."

"It is kind of weird," replied
Flynn, eyeing the statue reflect-
ively; "maybe we ought to re-
move it."

"Remove it!" exclaimed the fair
critic, "you ought to destroy it."

And that is what happened.
Flynn ordered Hayes to have the
statue taken out and broken up
with an ax.

Treasury officials were out-
raged when they learned of the
matter, and Edward Bruce, head
of the Fine Arts Section, indig-
nantly telephoned Flynn. Bruce's
ears are still ringing from the

The Bronx boss pu
until after a gay din.
And that's why the

By DRE

tongue-lashing he got for his
pains.

"You keep out of this," Flynn
barked. "I'll put you out of
business if you open your mouth."

One Art Headache After Another

The New York Fair has been
one headache after another for
Fine Arts officials.

They were still smarting from
their rude experience with the



Edward J. Flynn
"It is kind of weird"

Lincoln statue when another blow
struck. Inslee Hopper, brilliant
young Princeton graduate who
supervised the execution of forty
sculptures for the forty foreign
buildings, received the following
irate letter from Joseph Walter,
Brooklyn artist:

"I experienced a great shock
last Sunday when I saw my figure,
'Chemistry,' holding a Red flag
in the Soviet Building. I dis-
cussed the matter with the engi-
neer of the Fair Commission and
learned you had nothing to do
with the placement of the figures.
However, I intend to take every
necessary step to have my statue
removed and will welcome your
advice."

May 22, 1944

Lt. Sheldon Hine
623 Maryland Avenue, N. E.
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sheldon:

I have discovered the brief item with respect to the heroic bronze statue of Lincoln in the Interior Building. At least I imply it is the heroic bronze although the article does not say so in so many words. The sculptor's name is Louis Slobodkin and it states, "Among them there are his monumental bronze Abe Lincoln which stands in the Interior Building in Washington, etc." We would very much like to have a photograph of this heroic bronze if it is at all available.

I was very glad to see you for a few moments on your visit here and hope the time will come when you will be back permanently again.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAW:CHS
L.A. Warren
Enc.

1891

1891

1891

1891

1891

Louis Slobodkin— Winner of the Caldecott Medal

ELEANOR ESTES

Mr. Slobodkin was the illustrator of the most recent juvenile by Mrs. Estes, "Rufus M." (Harcourt, Brace), a runner-up for the Newbery Medal. Mrs. Estes knows well the artist and his work. Formerly a children's librarian, in the New Haven and New York public libraries, Mrs. Estes published her first book, "The Moffats" in 1941. She has since written "The Middle Moffatt," "The Sun and the Wind and Mr. Todd" and "Rufus M.", all with pictures by Mr. Slobodkin.

► It takes an artist of the extraordinary stature of Louis Slobodkin to employ his talents with equally happy results in the conception of monuments and the making of a book for little children. Indeed it is an exciting thought that the creator of sixteen-foot statues is the creator too of the magical pictures in James Thurber's "Many Moons" (Harcourt, Brace) for which he has been awarded this year's Caldecott Medal.

How fresh and delicate are the water colors and pen drawings in "Many Moons!" It is as though the artist had personally drawn his wet brush across each printed page, giving them their radiant and gemlike quality. Perhaps it is because he has done his own mechanics, his own color separations that he achieves this unusual freshness, this illusion of almost being able to feel the texture of the velvet on the throne, hear the cool rustle of the silken hangings. He creates the impression that the machine has had little to do with the making of this book.

All the books that Louis Slobodkin illustrates bear this warm and human touch. However, it is impossible to evaluate his work as an illustrator of books without taking into account his development as a sculptor. For undoubtedly it is this eminent artist's long experience as a sculptor that gives his drawings their rich forminess, their three-dimensional quality. His pictures come out at you warm, alive and vibrant, with distance and shape throughout.

My husband and I first met Louis and his wife, Florence, some years ago in Rockport on Cape Ann. We became a part of a happy audience sitting on the sand, listening to an inexhaustible supply of stories about his experiences drawn from a rich

and varied background, and to a vigorous presentation of his aesthetic conclusions. From these stories we absorbed a great deal of information about Louis Slobodkin.

Louis has been drawing ever since he can remember. He was born in Albany, N. Y., and he spent his early years drawing and trying to keep awake in school. He says he passed his Latin by drawing legionnaires.

When Louis was about ten years old one of those significant happenings occurred which deeply affect a person's development. His brother brought him some modeling wax appropriated from an abandoned school house. Louis' delight in his first piece of sculpture, which commenced as a red Indian and emerged after many transmutations as Benjamin Franklin complete with eye glasses, convinced him that he would become a sculptor. From then on he was impatient for the day to come when he could leave school and get to work as an artist.

That day came when he was fifteen. His parents wisely agreed that Louis had spent enough time dreaming and drawing in the back seat at school and that he might follow his own course in becoming an artist. So Louis came down to New York, enrolled in the Beaux Arts where he studied sculpture all day long. At night he ran an elevator. Louis won innumerable medals at the Beaux Arts most of which he pawned, to his regret now, for his sons would like to see them. He was pleasantly surprised at that time to find that his fist carried weight and it was an ill-timed punch in the nose which kept him from being a Prix-de-Paris man directly, and indirectly affected his candidacy for the Prix-de-Rome.

Publishers' Weekly

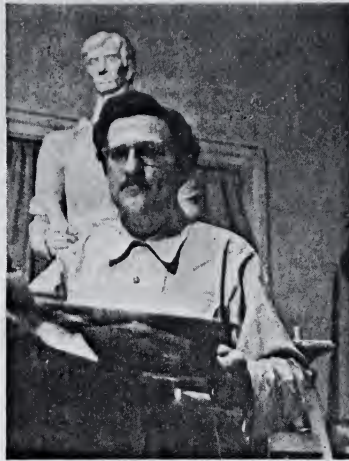
5/13/1944

A visit to Louis' studio brings to mind the fruitful results of those years of study. His studio is in the old Tiffany building on Fourth Avenue. It's a good building, its wooden floors sag comfortably to the step and Louis' studio is a lively one. A great deal of his sculpture stands around, and one feels at once how much nobility, serenity, warmth, humor, and quiet restraint are in his work, as for example, the Bather, which river-like and powerful appears to have existed for all time.

Some of his sailors are here, in bronze and in terra cotta, reminders of a trip he took in his early twenties when he shipped out as a deckhand on the S.S. *Halikala*, a freighter bound for the Argentine. This voyage was remarkable for a one man mutiny he staged for which he subsequently had to languish in chains in the brig for four long hours. And it was a voyage on which he made many water colors and drawings of sailors, motifs for much of his sculpture—the famous Sailor's Music now on its way to England, the uproarious Fo' castle Waltz, the Coiling Rope Sailor, the Sailor's Hula, the Sea Lawyer, and the Bucket Bath Sailor, and others, all of them spontaneous and beautiful.

Much of Louis' work is heroic and epic in character and can be seen in public buildings throughout the country. Among them there are his monumental bronze Abe Lincoln which stands in the Interior Building in Washington; three unusual sandstone panels erected in North Adams; and two impressive nine ton black granite eagles which can be seen in Johnstown. He prefers to create his sculpture in relation to some architectural scheme because he likes knowing that his work will have a permanent place on this earth rather than be floating around at exhibitions. So he enjoys drawing for books because in his mind it bears a relation to architectural sculpture.

The first book Louis illustrated and designed was Eleanor Estes' "The Moffats" (*Harcourt, Brace*). In fact this was his first effort at pen drawing. When the manuscript for "The Moffats" was finished I asked Louis if he would do the pictures. I was very timid about asking the creator of monumental sculpture to work on such a small scale. However he was delighted and with his customary energy and typical enthusiasm



Louis Slobodkin, Caldecott Medal winner, at work in his studio

he has, since then, encompassed the whole field of book illustration and design. He knows all the processes of book production, can count the picas, and sees a book through all its journey to the bound volume.

No matter what medium he employs, pen and ink, dry crayon, or water colors, the fruits of his work are beautiful, his style unmistakably individual and original. He handles each book as he feels emotionally it should be handled. If his conception of a book calls for epic treatment, how grand, lusty, robust, and heroic he can be, as for example in the superb red conté drawings for "The Sun and the Wind and Mr. Todd," by Eleanor Estes (*Harcourt, Brace*). It is not surprising that many of his brother artists have likened these beautiful plates to the work of Blake. In another mood are the historically honest, bold, and vigorous line drawings for "Peter the Great" by Nina Brown Baker (*Vanguard*). And if the story is a fanciful one like James Thurber's "Many Moons," his fertile imagination produces a picture for "the horns of a dilemma," "the square of the hippopotamus," or for "things that go bump." His pen-and-ink drawings in the Moffat books are funny, crisp, tender

May 13, 1944





One of Louis Slobodkin's color pictures from James Thurber's "Many Moons" (Harcourt, Brace), which won him the Caldecott Medal

and wise. By the sensitive and beautiful quality of his line drawings he expresses the true inner emotions of the characters.

Louis has a deep reservoir of ideas, and it is far from surprising that he should begin writing his own books, two of which are soon to be published. One is a picture book for two-to-five year olds called "The Friendly Animals." Vanguard is planning to publish it in September or October. The other is "Magic Michael," a juvenile for older children to be published in September by Macmillan. He also casts a ruminative eye over the field of the classics. All this activity in books is in

addition to his duties as a father, for he and Florence have two very fine sons, Larry, who is now fifteen and already winning scholarships for himself at college, and Michael, who is four and winning everybody's heart, and who has inherited his father's bright friendly face. And it is in addition to all that he is carrying on a full production schedule, creating his own sculpture, being the very active vice-president of the American Group, the moving force behind the Sculptor's Guild, arranging for exhibitions, designing catalogs, and giving talks on the radio, in schools, and in museums.

Publishers' Weekly

11-7-1950

Dear Dr. Warren:-

So - it is Oakland, Oregon;
all my notes said "Ashland," and how on
earth that supposed "fact" got true I can't
recall. I am air mailing them.

After having once more and
once again checked my facts and sources, I
am compelled to differ in a few instances with
yours. An instance comes to mind: Your #70
is not in D. N. C. but over the line in
Maryland in the cemetery named Fort Lincoln.
Now temporarily mounted; permanent position
not determined. This by correspondence with
the Company that now owns it, and I have
seen it in the grounds. I notice also that
you do not list Slobodkin's Lincoln - it's
in Washington, so that the total for D. N. C.
is not altered by taking O'Connor's statue into
Maryland. If you care to have a memo on

our differences I'll gladly send you one.
I know that I want to be right, and am
sure you are the same.

Cordially,

F. Lauriston Bullard.

November 15, 1950

Mr. F. Lauriston Bullard
141 Walton Park
Melrose Highlands, 76, Mass.

My dear Mr. Bullard:

Happy indeed to hear from you and thanks very much for the correction about the identical location of the O'Conner statue, although I understand it is not definitely located yet, all of the cemetry is in Maryland, of course that will be the proper plact to locate it.

With respect to the ⁸Globodkin Lincoln in the Interior Department Building it is my impression that it was made of stone and I find in Who's Who in America that it is listed as in bronze. I am indeed glad to learn of this omission. I expect it is of heroic signs.

I will be happy indeed to learn of any other errors which may have crept into our list and if you care to submit your manuscript before you send it to the press we will be happy to go over it. Have you been successful in finding a publisher, if so when may we anticipate the bargain.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAW:JK



Its name indicates its character

The Lincoln National Life Foundation

Fort Wayne, Indiana

R. GERALD McMURTRY
DIRECTOR

August 7, 1963

Mr. Louis Slobodkin
150 W. 80th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Slobodkin:

We wonder if we may trouble you for some information on a statue of Lincoln which you completed in 1939. In our file we have a picture of this statue and also some rather controversial newspaper clippings.

We should like to know whether or not this statue is in existence, or whether it was in fact destroyed. Any information which you are able to give us will be appreciated.

Enclosed is a stamped addressed envelope for your convenience in answering.

Sincerely yours,

Ruth P. Higgins

(Mrs.) Ruth PHiggins

rph/
1 enc.



The Lincoln National Life Foundation
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Moved-Left No Address

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12

Mr. Louis Slobodkin
150 W. 80th Street
New York City, N. Y.

REMOVED
LEFT NO ADDRESS
NEW YORK, NEW YORK



PLANETARIUM
STATION





61.
LOUIS SLOBODKIN (1903-75)
Abe Lincoln: Rail Joiner, 1939
bronze, 36½ in.

BETH URDANG THROUGH

October 7, 1987

Mr. Mark Neely
Lincoln National Life
1300 S. Clinton Street
Fort Wayne, Ind. 46801

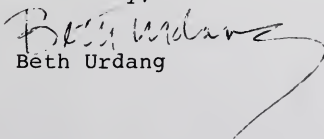
Dear Mark Neely:

Since we last spoke, I was given some additional information on the Louis Slobodkin bronze, Abe Lincoln: Rail Joiner, which I thought might be of interest. This is a smaller version of a 7' high bronze which was commissioned for the Department of the Interior by Eleanor Roosevelt. I believe a plaster was originally commissioned for the 1939 World's Fair, and when the plaster was destroyed, Slobodkin sued the U.S. Government and won his case. His lawyer, Edward Greenbaum, received this bronze as a gift from the sculptor in appreciation. The price, as discussed, is \$35,000. I don't know whether or not that's a negotiable figure.

I was also just offered a bronze bust of Abraham Lincoln, 6" high, by Paul Manship. If you like, I will look into the price. Provenance would be Estate of the Artist.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,


Beth Urdang

encl.



SLEEKBOOK, LOUIS

DRAWER 2/2

STATUES

